



# NEWS RELEASE

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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**No. 07020702**

## **JMTC welcomes Iraq trainers home**

**Grafenwöhr, Germany (Feb. 7, 2007)** – The 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command welcomed 32 Soldiers home from Iraq today.

The troops had been deployed to Iraq for the past year, charged with training the Iraqi 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> National Police Division. The national police are a gendarmerie, a force organized along military lines and charged with duties among a civilian population. Working alongside regular police as well as military forces, the national police are typically used when security concerns are greater than the regular police alone can handle.

U.S. Army, Europe, deployed 88 Soldiers from units all over USAREUR to serve as the National Police Training Team.

In Grafenwöhr, anxious family members and friends awaited arrival of a charter bus bringing the Soldiers from Ramstein. The tension evaporated quickly enough, though, as the bus pulled up and the troops offloaded.

Amid the squeals of delight and bear-hug embraces, the family members waiting in the JMTC command conference room, the returning Soldiers reunited with loved ones, and shook hands with friends and JMTC well-wishers.

"There's no way to describe how I feel," said Veronica Babauta, wife of Master Sgt. William Babauta. "We're going to spend the next few weeks smothering (William) with our love and our time."

Mission number one for the team now, said JMTC chief of staff Col. Timothy C. Touzinsky, is reintegration.

"It's hard to believe it's been a year," Touzinsky said. "Your families have worked hard to hold things together, and now your job is to reintegrate and re-establish, and the whole JMTC team is going to be there for you."

While downrange, rather than serving solely as an academy cadre, the team spent time living and working with the Iraqi force, according to Maj. Craig King, logistics officer for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade team.

"We established a long-lasting relationship with our unit," he said. "We spent a lot of time together, eating with them, living with them ... and the little things, just sitting and drinking tea and the small talk in the late hours ... it all helped establish an incredible rapport."

The team lived on a U.S. forward operating base, situated about five minutes from their National Police unit.

The up-close-and-personal approach meant the team often conducted operations alongside their Iraqi trainees. Two USAREUR team members received the Purple Heart for injuries received during the deployment.

“It was a long, hard year,” said Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Bennie Rockwell, operations NCO who oversaw much of the training for this team. “I’m just glad to be home so I can help my wife, Petra, get the house we’re building finished!”

Seven of the returning Soldiers arrived at Grafenwöhr, six at Vilseck and 19 at Hohenfels, according to JMTC operations officials.

An official “Welcome Home” ceremony will be held Feb. 15 at Hohenfels.